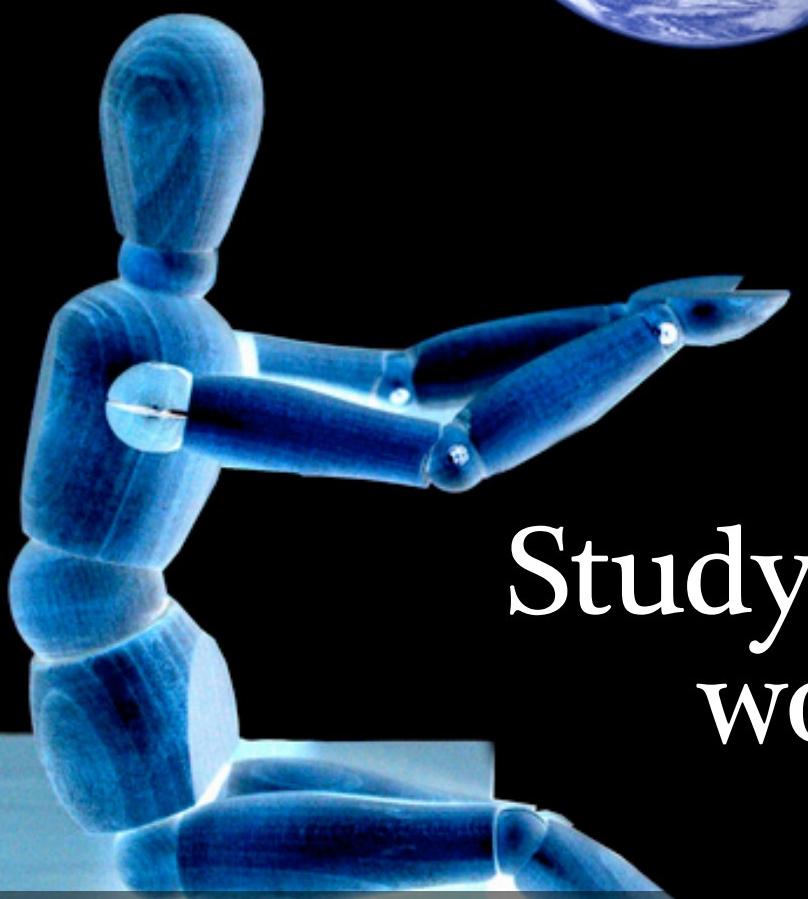


# Pragati

The Indian  
National Interest  
Review

No 30 | Sep 2009



## Studying the world

WHITHER POLICE REFORMS?  
AFTER SHARM-EL-SHEIKH  
CLIMATE CHANGE COMES SECOND  
MAKE IT EASIER TO VISIT INDIA  
BRACING FOR DROUGHT

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Photo: Russell Mark Watkins

## INTERNAL SECURITY

**The Khaki must shine**

*From ruler's police to people's police*

PRAKASH SINGH

THE POLICE organisation in India in its present form is based, essentially, on the Police Act of 1861, which was specifically designed to raise a police which would be "politically more useful." It constituted a single homogeneous force of civil constabulary for the entire country to perform duties which could not be assigned to the military arm.

The Indian Police Commission of 1902-03, which reviewed the working of the police, found that "the police force throughout the country is in a most unsatisfactory condition, that abuses are common everywhere, that this involves great injury to the people and discredit to the government, and that radical reforms are urgently necessary." This was the first time that a responsible body talked of police reforms. Ironically, the battle for reforms continues even after more than a hundred years.

At the dawn of Independence, the political masters could have restructured the police and made it accountable to the people. The transformation was unfortunately not carried out. As years passed, every successive government found it convenient to use, misuse and abuse the police

for its partisan political ends. In 1977, the government appointed the National Police Commission (NPC) as it felt that "far reaching changes have taken place in the country" since independence but "there has been no comprehensive review of the police system after independence despite radical changes in the political, social and economic situation in the country." The NPC submitted eight detailed reports between 1979 and 1981, containing comprehensive recommendations covering the entire gamut of police working.

The government's response to the core recommendations of the NPC was, unfortunately, negative. In 1983, when the reports were forwarded to the State Governments, they were asked merely to take appropriate follow-up action. The hint was more than obvious and it was not surprising therefore that the state governments conveniently put the major recommendations of the NPC in cold storage.

These recommendations of the NPC were subsequently resurrected in a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) before the Supreme Court in 1996. At the time the petition was filed, the Supreme

Court's attention was drawn, among other things, to two major tragedies which had overtaken the Republic due to the failure of the police to uphold the rule of law: the Delhi riots of 1984 and the demolition of the disputed shrine at Ayodhya in 1992. The Justice Nanavati Commission, which inquired into the 1984 riots, recommended that "there should be an independent police force which should be free from the political influence and which is well equipped to take immediate and effective action." The Liberhan Commission report on Ayodhya is yet to be made public.

During the pendency of the petition, another tragedy befell the country--the Gujarat Riots in 2002 when the police acted in a partisan manner. The National Human Rights Commission, which inquired into the incidents, urged "that the matter of police reform receive attention at the highest political level, at the Centre and in the States, and that this issue be pursued in good faith, and on a

for last over ten years; (iv) the fact that various Commissions and Committees have made recommendations on similar lines for introducing reforms in the police set up in the country; and (v) total uncertainty as to when police reforms would be introduced, we think that there cannot be any further wait, and the stage has come for issue of appropriate directions for immediate compliance so as to be operative till such time a new model Police Act is prepared by the Central Government and/or the State Governments pass the requisite legislations."

In a landmark judgment on September 22, 2006 the Supreme Court demolished in one stroke the colonial police structure that hobbled India for over 145 years. It ordered the setting up of three institutions at the state level with a view to insulating the police from extraneous influences, giving it functional autonomy and ensuring its accountability. These institutions are:

- *State Security Commission* which would lay down the broad policies and give directions for the performance of the preventive tasks and service oriented functions of the police;
- *Police Establishment Board* comprising the Director General of Police and four other senior officers of the Department which shall decide all transfers, postings, promotions and other service related matters of officers of and below the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police and make appropriate recommendations regarding the postings and transfers of officers of the rank of Superintendent of Police and above to the state government; and
- *Police Complaints Authority* at the district and state levels with a view to inquiring into allegations of misconduct by the police personnel.

Besides, the Court ordered that the Director-General of Police shall be selected by the state government from amongst the three senior-most officers of the department who have been empanelled for promotion to that rank by the Union Public Service Commission, and that the appointee shall have a prescribed minimum tenure of two years. Police officers on operational duties in the field like the inspector-general in charge of a zone, deputy inspector-general in charge of a range, superintendent in charge of a district and station house officer in charge of a police station would also have a minimum tenure of two years. The Court also ordered the separation of investigating police from the law and order police to en-

**The first time that a responsible body called for police reforms was in 1902. Yet, the battle for reforms continues even after more than a hundred years. To get them off the ground public opinion must exert relentless pressure on the executive and the judiciary.**

sustained basis with the greater interest of the country alone in mind."

It is significant that while the PIL was progressing in the Supreme Court, three Committees were appointed by the government at different periods of time to deliberate over the question of police reforms: the Ribeiro Committee in 1998, the Padmanabhaiah Committee in 2000 and the Malimath Committee on criminal justice system in 2002. All three committees broadly came to the same conclusions and emphasised the urgent need for police reforms in the context of newly emerging challenges. However, the much needed reforms were never carried out because of the combined opposition of the political parties.

The dilemma before the Supreme Court was whether it should wait further for the governments to take suitable steps for police reforms. However, as recorded in the judgment, "having regard to (i) the gravity of the problem; (ii) the urgent need for preservation and strengthening of Rule of Law; (iii) pendency of even this petition

sure speedier investigation, better expertise and improved rapport with the people.

The Union government was also asked to set up a National Security Commission for the selection and placement of heads of central police organisations, upgrading the effectiveness of these forces and improving the service conditions of its personnel.

The Soli Sorabjee Committee drafted and submitted a Model Police Act to the central government on October 30, 2006. The Model Police Act conformed to the fundamental principles enunciated by the Supreme Court, though there are slight differences in nomenclature and in details.

The Supreme Court orders and Sorabjee Committee recommendations have the potential to transform the police and change its working philosophy. The transition is however encountering strong opposition from the political leadership and the bureaucracy. Ten states have satisfactorily complied with the directions of the Supreme Court, but the majority of states are dragging their feet. Some states have enacted laws with a view to circumventing the implementation of Supreme Court's directions. Unfortunately, there is total absence of public consultation on the subject.

The reforms, it needs to be understood, are not for the glory of the police---they are to give better security and protection to the people of the country, uphold their human rights and generally improve governance.

The Supreme Court has meanwhile constituted a monitoring committee to oversee the implemen-

tation of its directions in the various states. It is obvious that unless the judiciary cracks the whip and makes an example of one or two non-compliant states, the much needed reforms would remain only as an aspiration. Unfortunately, the monitoring committee is working at a slow pace and seems averse to making any stringent recommendation to the Supreme Court. Public opinion must press the executive and the judiciary to accelerate the process of police reforms. The media should also contribute to this effort.

The stakes are very high. The challenges on the law and order front are getting more complex with every passing day. Organised crime is spreading its tentacles. Naxalites pose a formidable challenge. The terrorist threat is extremely serious and has the potential to destabilise the country. We cannot face the formidable challenges of the present times with a police force which was raised to meet the challenges of a colonial past. Our first line of defence has to be strengthened and its capabilities augmented. There is no room for further delay.

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Prakash Singh is a former director-general of the Border Security Force (BSF) and was also police chief of Uttar Pradesh and Assam. He is a recipient of the *Padmashri*.

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## PAKISTAN

# After Sharm-el-Sheikh

*Dealing with the strategic consequences of a disastrous summit*

NITIN PAI

PRIME MINISTER Manmohan Singh's giveaway at Sharm-el-Sheikh enables Pakistan's military-jihadi complex to distract attention from the Talibanisation of the Pakistani state, and mobilise the people against that old external enemy, India. It allows the military establishment to cite the India threat to avoid committing troops for the United States-led war against the Taliban. And also—now that the separatism in Jammu & Kashmir is petering out—to use Balochistan as a pretext to provide

fresh justification for its longstanding strategy of using terrorism to contain India.

In addition to this, it is quite likely that Pakistani officials and commentators will use Indian meddling to counter and mitigate charges of their country being a source of international terrorism. Debating points and PR value apart, this won't make a material difference: to the extent that Pakistani terrorists threaten the international community while Baloch militants only threaten Pakistan,

the rest of the world is unlikely to take too much notice.

It is also likely that Balochistan will figure on the bilateral diplomatic agenda—but it is unclear how Pakistan wishes to benefit from it. Because if Pakistan takes the position of “you stop hitting us in Balochistan and we’ll stop hitting you in Kashmir and elsewhere”, India could well say, “OK, that’s a deal.” Such a move is understandable only if the Pakistani authorities want to wind down the anti-India jihad and need a face-saving deal to sell to their own population. Since the chances of this happening are slimmer than that of snow in Chennai, it is unlikely that Pakistan will want to propose such a deal in the bilateral dialogue.

While the utility of bringing up Balochistan in the joint-statement is limited from this perspective, it is just what Pakistani government needs to tar Baloch nationalism in the eyes of its public,

ters, for think-tanks to arrange workshops and seminars on the subject, and for civil society to take greater interest in what happens there. All this might sound sarcastic, but it is not. Surely, unless India does all this, how can it promote its own interests in “a stable, democratic Islamic Republic of Pakistan”?

In the parliamentary debate on Sharm-el-Sheikh summit Dr Singh stood his ground, and didn’t make use of the lifelines that were created for him by the foreign ministry.

Whether he intended it or not, Dr Singh has made himself personally vulnerable. Whether he intended it or not, Sharm-el-Sheikh is a gamble: if there is another Pakistan-originated terrorist attack during his tenure, he will be thrown to the dogs by his own party; if there isn’t one, as the phrase goes, Singh is King. Since the only people who can prevent a Pakistan-originated terrorist attack are the powers that be in Paki-

### **Whether Prime Minister Manmohan Singh intended it or not, Sharm-el-Sheikh is a gamble: if there is another Pakistan-originated terrorist attack during his tenure, he will be thrown to the dogs by his own party; if there isn’t one, as the phrase goes, Singh is King.**

and use it to carry on the ongoing, bloody repression in the province.

So how should India deal with the outcome of Sharm-el-Sheikh insofar as it concerns Balochistan? First, there is no need for the Indian government to be defensive, apologetic or even too fastidious in trying to correct Pakistani allegations that it is carrying out covert operations in Balochistan. It should be fair game to respond to a proxy war by opening up another front and going on the offensive. If Pakistan protests too much, it can be told that its allegations are baseless, asked to submit evidence and made to do the very things it asks of India.

Second, since it was Yousuf Raza Gilani who presented information on threats in Balochistan, it is only natural for the Indian government to begin to take official positions on the developments there. To the extent that the ferment in Balochistan is due to colonial exploitation, denial and violation of human rights, India should impress upon its dialogue partner the need to address the genuine grievances of the Baloch people. It is time for the Indian media to read up on Balochistan mat-

stan—whether it is Asif Ali Zardari, Mr Gilani or the military-jihadi complex—Dr Singh’s fate is effectively in the hands of his Pakistani adversaries. Another terrorist attack during the UPA government’s second innings will certainly hurt India; but it will abruptly end Dr Singh’s prime ministerial career.

Just what will Messrs Zardari, Gilani and Kayani do when they realise that they have Dr Singh by the jugular? In addition to using the Balochistan reference to obfuscate their culpability in the Talibanisation of Pakistani society, they will first realise that they suddenly have more than just ‘mutual interdependency’ without even having to build a gas pipeline and then blackmail India over it.

Second, they can—with genuine or faux sincerity—suggest that unless India makes concessions over Jammu & Kashmir and a number of other bilateral issues, it will be very hard to rein in the jihadis. Dr Singh’s gamble leaves him ever more vulnerable to this old blackmail. It does not matter if Messrs Zardari and Gilani can or cannot actually do anything about the Lashkar-e-Taiba, and

it does not matter if they do anything about it or not--they will still be able to ask India to make progress on the composite dialogue to keep the 'peace process' moving.

Third, should another terrorist attack occur, Messrs Zardari & Gilani can first deny, then offer to investigate, then admit that it originated in Pakistan. In New Delhi, like they sacked the incompetent Shivraj Patil after too much damage had already occurred, the Congress Party might be compelled to seek Dr Singh's resignation.

The only way Singh can be King is when there is no major terrorist attack. Only major concessions by India might prevent those attacks from happening.

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Nitin Pai is the editor of *Pragati* and blogs at *The Acorn* ([acorn.nationalinterest.in](http://acorn.nationalinterest.in))

## SRI LANKA

# Life after extinction

*The future of the LTTE*

ANKUR KUMAR

THE DEFEAT of the Tamil Tigers over the past few months has been as dramatic as it has been decisive. The world stood witness to the spectacle of the formidable Tigers, who once looked inextricably linked with Sri Lanka's past and future, crumbling beneath the inexorable pressure put on them by the Sri Lankan state. That the Tigers would face severe difficulties was clear three months ago when their top leadership was decimated and it no longer controlled any territory. But some recent events and trends have pushed them even further into oblivion. It is increasingly evident that even though the Tamil Tigers' cause may still have resonance among the Tamils at home and abroad, a strategy of reviving the Tigers' fortunes is highly elusive.

The controversial arrest of their new chief Kumaran Pathmanathan (KP) has left the Tigers rudderless. Formerly the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam's (LTTE) chief fundraiser and arms supplier, he was indisputably the most senior leader alive. His arrest is controversial and significant for a host of reasons. Despite his obvious stature and contribution to LTTE, KP was not a unanimous choice for the top leadership. By confirming Velupillai Prabhakaran's death and by espousing a more moderate and political approach towards achieving self determination for Tamils, he had alienated the hardliners in the LTTE and significant sections of the Tamil diaspora. There are suggestions that one of his rivals betrayed KP, which led to his arrest. If this is indeed the case, it reflects an extremely bitter feud within the LTTE

senior leadership and dissonance among the Tamil diaspora---the last thing the Tigers need in this most difficult of circumstances.

KP's arrest in South-east Asia should deeply trouble the Tigers for more reasons. It reflects the urgency and single minded commitment of the Sri Lankan state for hunting down operatives, even outside Sri Lanka. The Tigers have achieved historical notoriety for their international network spread in dozens of countries. Tiger leaders as well as sympathisers may rethink their commitment to the LTTE cause and may no longer feel as safe as they once felt in whichever country they reside in.

The episode will demoralise the Tigers for another reason. Besides being perceived to hold the key to the Tigers' much publicised but rarely disclosed wealth, KP had many contacts among diplomats, police and intelligence officials. This allowed him to work for the LTTE in many countries without fear of detection or detention. Once KP is subjected to severe interrogation, he might expose the collusion of many countries in the LTTE cause.

Faced with strong incontrovertible evidence, the "exposed" countries may well decide to go after the LTTE operatives and organisations which the Sri Lankan state claims are now operating in their countries. This will be bad news for a terrorist group whose sole hope of survival rests with the powerful Tamil diaspora. KP recognised the same when he spoke of a "provisional transnational government of Tamil Eelam."

President Mahinda Rajapakse has shown himself to be a ruthless leader who would do anything to eliminate the Tigers from resurfacing in any form. His strategy in the coming months and years will significantly determine the Tigers' fortunes as well as the future of the Sri Lankan state in general. Mr Rajapakse has proven to be a crafty strategist and has successfully taken the global community's help in eliminating the LTTE. This was evident during the active war with the LTTE when he astutely garnered the support of India, China and Pakistan. More importantly, KP's arrest in a South-east Asian country buttresses the international support garnered by the Sri Lankan president. Despite symbolic protests by the international community, Mr Rajapakse does not appear to be globally isolated and is still revelling in the aftermath of a historic victory.

Yet for all the euphoria surrounding the defeat of the Tigers, it would be premature to write them off yet. As long as Mr Rajapakse does not work to eliminate the core reasons for Tamil disillusionment, there is always the possibility of a dramatic reversal of fortunes for the Tigers. In an election

People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) swept to an easy victory in the Uva Provincial Council elections in the South. The government may well be riding on euphoria among the Sinhalese majority and would benefit from a "tough" stance against the Tamils in the run up to the elections. Even Mr Rajapakse's allies within the government may not be too keen on "devolution." This strategy would not go down well with the Tamils and may provoke disillusionment.

Another factor that continues to provoke international outrage is the conditions of the more than 250,000 Tamil refugees who languish in appalling conditions in make-shift camps. There is considerable international pressure on Colombo to ensure that a majority of them be resettled before the year end. But Mr Rajapakse does not appear to be in any visible hurry over this issue. He doesn't appear to be too bothered about global concerns about their welfare. This might turn out to be his biggest strategic blunder yet. A swift return to normalcy in their conditions is necessary to prevent boiling resentment among the Tamil diaspora. Even more worrying is the undeniable

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recently held in post-war Sri Lanka, the pro-LTTE Tamil National Alliance (TNA) emerged as the largest party in the Vavuniya Municipal Council and the second largest party in the Jaffna urban council. It is easy to dismiss these elections as local elections and consequently irrelevant. But they do reflect rising resentment among the Tamils which could later translate into increased support for the beleaguered Tigers. Mr Rajapakse's emerging strategy may well explain the reasons for their discontent.

Mr Rajapakse had earnestly promised devolution of power to the Tamils once the Tigers were militarily defeated. Months after the defeat, the government has made a radical departure from this stand by relegating the devolution until after the Presidential elections. The president's United



animosity being felt by the Tamils who have been confined for months in abominable conditions. The "screening" of Tigers among the Tamils in these camps needs to be carried out urgently. This will reduce the risk of the confined Tamils---a vast majority of who are innocent and moderate---might end up supporting the Tigers in a cause which they would have previously rejected. It is this anger at being discriminated against by the Sinhalese majority which led to this conflict in the first place and Mr Rajapakse should do his utmost to avoid replicating the same breeding grounds for terrorism.

The Tigers face an extremely daunting and largely uncertain future. They have been militarily destroyed and their top leadership has been eliminated. On the other hand they still have im-

pressive propaganda, fundraising and procurement infrastructure overseas. KP's arrest might look like the end of the Tigers. But it could possibly be looked at by Tiger hardliners as an end to what they considered as an unlikely moderate path for the LTTE. Mr Rajapakse has violently eliminated the Tigers and now has to guard against unbridled optimism. He has to ensure that he does not get caught up in petty political gains and sees the larger picture of Sinhala-Tamil reconciliation. Whether the president indeed fulfils the

promise of integrating Tamils into the political process and granting them political autonomy is crucial to achieving a lasting solution. Unless the root causes for Tamil discontent are addressed holistically, the Tigers will be lurking in the background.

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Ankur Kumar is a research analyst with World-Check Terrorism and Insurgency Research Unit.

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## CLIMATE CHANGE

# Addressing the real problem: climate of poverty

*Global warming is low priority*

WILLIE SOON & DAVID LEGATES

WHAT DOES the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation think about carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>)-induced global warming?

"We don't think about it," Bill Gates said during last year's Engineers Without Borders International Conference. On another occasion, he told *Newsweek* magazine: "The angle I'll look at most is ...What about the 4 billion poorest people? What about energy and environmental issues for them?"

The question, however, is not simply a matter of re-prioritising limited resources. More fundamentally, the scientific case for catastrophic global climate change from increased atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> is substantially flawed.

The Indian government also recognises the need to put real, immediate, life-and-death problems ahead of speculative risks 50-100 years from now---and base the country's health and prosperity on energy, economic and infrastructure development, full employment, and diseases and poverty eradication.

"It is obvious that India needs to substantially increase its per-capita energy consumption to provide a minimally acceptable level of well-being to its people," the Indian government's National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAP) declared. Moreover, a stronger economy and increased living standards will reduce the vulnerability of poor families to extreme weather events and climate change, natural or man-made.

Over 400 million Indians remain energy-deprived, impoverished, and reliant on wood,

grass and animal dung for heating and cooking. When the sun goes down, their lives shut down. India's per-capita CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are roughly one-twentieth of the United States, one-tenth of the EU, Japan and Russia, and a quarter of the world average. Even under rosy economic growth scenarios, India's future per-capita CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will remain far below those in most developed countries.

Without electricity, people must live at subsistence levels. What little they can manufacture must be done by day, by kerosene lamp and by hand. Women and children spend hours every day collecting firewood, squatting in filth to make dung patties, and carrying infected water from distant rivers and lakes. The lack of refrigeration and safe drinking water means millions suffer from severe diarrhoea, and countless thousands die annually. Open heating and cooking fires cause lung infections that kill thousands of infants, children and mothers, year after year. Poverty is rampant, education minimal.

Given these realities, can you explain why certain rich and famous people and media outlets are fixated on "preventing" CO<sub>2</sub>-induced global warming? Why they obsess over computer-generated scenarios of climate disasters a century from now? Why they blame every weather incident and disease outbreak today on global warming, when the Earth has been cooling for at least five years?

Can you understand why, in the next breath, they oppose the construction of natural gas and

coal-fired power plants that could generate enough electricity to reduce the poverty and disease? And then oppose nuclear and hydroelectric facilities, as well?

As to climate science, there are no clear indications that rising CO<sub>2</sub> levels are changing the weather in ways or degrees that haven't been observed in past centuries and cycles. There has been no change in trends for large-scale droughts, floods, or rain, the NAP concluded.

The report also noted that average Indian temperatures have increased only 0.4 °C over the past century, while cooling trends can be found in northwestern India and parts of south India. Himalayan glaciers grew to their maximum ice accumulation about 260 years ago, according to the Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, and their

foods will be determined by their value as feedstock for bio-fuel, rather than their importance as human food or livestock feed," he points out. "India is currently providing a strong momentum for bio-fuel production, [which means that] food production may be in jeopardy."

Ironically, many of the same environmentalists who worry about global warming, and oppose large-scale electricity generation, are also against biotechnology—which could create more nutritious crops that grow better under hotter, cooler, wetter or drier conditions. That would enable India's farmers to improve productivity and feed more people, no matter what the climate does.

That's why Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Norman Borlaug, father of India's first "green revolution" in agriculture, is such a strong supporter of biotechnology.

So here is our answer to Bill Gates' question, "What about India's poorest people?" India should focus on feeding the poor, improving their health, and enhancing their economic conditions---rather than worrying about hypothetical anthropogenic global warming. Only then will India's economic and population growth be sustainable. Only then will its people be comfortable, and able to adapt to and weather or climate changes that Mother Nature might send them---just as they do in the West. That would only be fair.

### **Many of the same environmentalists who worry about global warming, and oppose large-scale electricity generation, are also against biotechnology—which could create more nutritious crops that grow better under hotter, cooler, wetter or drier conditions.**

well-known retreats began as Earth warmed following the 500-year-long Little Ice Age---not because of human CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Even the computer-generated "threat" of sea level rise does not match reality. Researchers from the National Institute of Oceanography at Goa observed that sea levels in the north Indian Ocean rose an average 1.1 to 1.8 millimetres per year (4.3-7.1 inches per century). That is slightly lower than the 7 inches per century global average---and way below Al Gore's scary "prediction" of 20 feet by 2100.

On forests and food supplies, India's carbon dioxide news is equally bullish. The Subcontinent's "net primary productivity" (plant and crop growth) could soar by nearly 70 percent if temperatures warm a little and atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations go from today's 380 ppm (0.0380 percent of the atmosphere) to 575 ppm by 2085, N H Ravindranath and colleagues from the Centre for Ecological Sciences of the Indian Institute of Science at Bangalore have calculated.

R T Gahukar is far less concerned about global warming, than about policies implemented in the name of preventing planetary climate changes. "If food crops are used for bio-energy, the price of

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Willie Soon is an astrophysicist at Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA. David Legates is a climatologist at the University of Delaware.

# FILTER

RAVI GOPALAN

► Climate change duality:  
External vs Domestic  
strategies

NANDAN NILEKANI argues that India's future depends on addressing climate change today. In a *YaleGlobal* article "India Should Combine Tough Climate Stand With Green Policy" he calls for India to fashion a long-term domestic strategy for climate change focused on a green economy while engaging actively in global debates on climate change and at Copenhagen in December. At the same time, he proposes rejection of any binding cuts imposed on emissions that would limit India's economic development goals.

► Asia's not there yet

MINXIN PEI, senior associate in the China Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace investigates the recent phraseology around the inexorable rise of Asia led by China and India and cautions that there is indeed a wide gap between America and the Asian states in reality that would not be bridged anytime soon. In an article in *Foreign Policy* "Think Again: Asia's Rise", he states that China and India's international standing should not be overstated because both face serious economic and social constraints that will limit their growth.

► Flat but tilted

SONER CAGAPTAY & ATA AKINER of the Turkish Research program at the The Washington Institute state that although globalisation had created a flat world, government

control of the national media and new communication tools tilted the politics in favour of existing governments, in both authoritarian regimes such as Russia, China, and Iran as well as democracies such as Italy and Turkey.

In a paper "The World is Tilted", they caution that the ICT revolution empowered authoritarian regimes as well as allowed undemocratic trends to sink roots in democracies and state that free press would be the best hope for a flatter, more democratic world.

► A meme change---Rising China vs Transformed China

CHARLES HORNER, senior fellow at Hudson Institute analyses the Xinjiang unrest in the context of a rapidly transforming China.

In an article for *Asia Chronicle*, "Rising China as Transformed China: A Problem for Strategic Analysis" he provides a historical perspective of China's transformations in the past that in his words resulted in an incident having intricate international ramifications today while it would have been regarded as nothing more than a drunken brawl, a generation ago.

He laments the strategic community's current lack of understanding of the constraints that would influence the PRC's future behaviour and calls for greater focus on the constraints that would shape the strategic choices of a China that will be a Transformed China, rather than the Rising China we know today.

► Chi-merica:A chimera

CHRISTOPHER M CLARKE, a former China analyst at the US State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research argues that an economically "symbiotic relationship" between the U.S. and China may in fact be a desperate embrace for fear of "going over the cliff with the other". In a *YaleGlobal* article "US-China Duopoly Is a Pipe-dream", he states that the political divide between the two surfaced in divergent strategic interests, and the US refusal to let China buy dual-use high technology items is proof that a Chi-merica is not in the offing.

► A new approach around the Durand Line

ANALYSTS AT the Center for a New American Security recommend an 'ink-blot' strategy on both sides of the Durand Line for the US and its allies, securing carefully chosen areas and building from positions of strength.

In "Triage: The Next Twelve Months in Afghanistan and Pakistan", a June CNAS policy paper, they favour a counter-insurgency strategy that emphasises protection of the population over killing of the Taliban insurgents and propose 'soft' metrics such as surrenders of insurgents, defused IEDs and number of tip-offs to gauge progress in their proposed strategy.

► Tensions in the South China Sea

SANDEEP ANAND, Research Assistant at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses,

New Delhi highlights the escalating tensions between China and the South-east Asian states, and a potential arms race in the South China Sea. In a paper "China's Maritime Intent in South China Sea vis-a-vis ASEAN", he cites the recent order for six-Kilo class diesel submarines by Vietnam as evidence of a nascent arms race and favours a strategy of collective bargaining by ASEAN with China.

► Direct taxes & retirement

MUKUL GASHER and AMARENDU NANDY discuss the implications of India's new direct tax code on retirement savings in a *Daily News & Analysis* (19th August) essay titled "Move towards EET is good, but handle retirement savings".

They welcome the move towards exempt-exempt-taxation treatment of savings, noting that this is consistent with international practice in middle- and high-income countries. However, one implication is that the pre-retirement withdrawals from provident schemes will also be subject to personal income tax. They analyse the implication of the new code and propose refinements ahead its implementation.

Ravi Gopalan is a research associate with *Pragati*.



Photo: DFID/Pippa Ranger

HIGHER EDUCATION & POLICY RESEARCH

## Galvanising international studies

*India's rising profile demands investment in intellectual foundations*

MUTHIAH ALAGAPPA

*"Today's world is becoming smaller in many respects. Whether it is the international economic crisis, or terrorism or climate change – what happens in one part of the world [also affects] other parts. The international economic and political order is changing. ... Our foreign policy should be able to cater to India's interests in these constantly changing circumstances."*

---Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, August 15, 2009

INDIA IS undergoing dramatic political, economic, social, and technological change. Firmly on the path of progress and modernity, India now appears confident it can overcome the many still formidable challenges and realise its true potential at home and abroad. In addition to mobilising domestic consensus, support, and resources, New Delhi has deemed it important to harness international support and resources for its development.

Beginning with the government of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and with significant initiatives undertaken by the governments of Prime Ministers P V Narasimha Rao, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and Manmohan Singh, India's international relations have been undergoing gradual but fundamental change. New Delhi now enjoys good relations with all major powers and Europe, has cultivated strong relations with countries in South-east Asia, Central Asia, West Asia, and the Persian Gulf, is re-invigorating its relations with Africa, and is seeking opportunities in Latin America. With sustained impressive economic growth rates over the last decade and a sophisticated foreign policy, India has emerged as a significant regional and global power with interests in a broadly defined Asia and the world.

International Studies (IS) in India, however, have not kept pace with the changing scope and content of India's international relations that must now address new challenges, problems, threats,

and opportunities in a wide range of domains including economics (trade, investment, finance), climate change, security (traditional and non-traditional), and regional and global governance. Despite a strong beginning in the early decades after independence, there is concern in several quarters in India that International Studies programs and institutions in the country are not fully able to cope with the demands and opportunities facing a modernising and rising India, which is fast integrating itself into a changing, complex, and increasingly knowledge driven world.

In comparative terms, India, which had the more developed International Studies programs and institutions in Asia in the 1950s and 1960s, has since fallen behind East Asian countries, particularly China. This is an unanticipated development in light of India's many advantages—an open society, freedom of thought and expression, and competence in the English language, among others.

India's rising profile in global affairs demands

dervalued in India. This cannot continue. Excellence in the social sciences is not merely "a nice thing to have" but essential for a rising India that seeks regional and global influence. Excellence in International Studies is especially crucial.

### **Building on existing schools**

The logical first step is to build on existing schools of International Studies in India. One or two schools (such as the School of International Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University or the Department of International Relations at Jadavpur University) should be targeted for restructuring and development (to make them comparable, for example, to the Woodrow Wilson School of International Studies at Princeton University, the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, or the London School of Economics and Politics). Their primary purpose would be to educate students at the master's level, but they would also have small, rigorous PhD programmes.

**India, which had the more developed International Studies programs and institutions in Asia in the 1950s and 1960s, has since fallen behind East Asian countries, particularly China. This is an unanticipated development in light of India's many advantages—an open society, freedom of thought and expression, and competence in the English language, among others.**

that the demand-supply disjuncture and the promise-reality gap should be addressed quickly and substantively with the goals of making the country a leading centre of knowledge, education, and research in international studies. Indian scholarship should contribute to increasing the knowledge base for India's international interaction and role. Creating world-class teaching and research institutions and programmes is indispensable in achieving these goals.

### **Creating world-class institutions and programmes in International Studies**

Contemporary India is home to leading institutions of learning for students entering the professions of medicine and engineering, and the natural sciences. An open, democratic, and rising India must be home to world-class departments and schools in the social sciences as well. For a number of reasons—cultural, systemic, and institutional—the social sciences have been un-

### **Creating new schools**

It may be an opportune time to create one or two new schools of International Studies in other regions of the country as well. Preferably, the new schools would focus on areas not well covered by existing ones. Agreement should be reached among existing and new schools to identify sub-fields in which each would build strength. Although more costly, the setting up of new schools would avoid problems associated with transforming existing institutions. In this connection, space must be available for privately funded institutions. The private sector should be encouraged to start schools of International Studies focused primarily on international economics, international finance, and international business. Through public-private partnerships, the private sector could also invest in linking existing schools and programmes in International Studies with leading business and law schools in the country to develop joint degree programmes.

## **Strengthening existing PhD programmes**

Vibrant International Studies and political science departments in existing central and state universities should be targeted to build strong PhD programmes. Emphasis and specialisation would vary with the strength and interest of faculty and course offerings in specific departments. Not all departments need offer the PhD degree in all sub-fields. Departments should be encouraged to specialise and build a reputation in select sub-disciplines, issue areas, and countries or regions.

## **A National Defence University**

A National Defence University (NDU) should be established soon. The Indian government has accepted a proposal to this effect. Successful implementation could fill a void and provide a much-needed stimulus to the development of security

To be regarded as a country or region expert, a scholar must be competent in a relevant foreign language.

In light of India's size, the country should have two or three strong language centres providing basic and advanced training in key foreign languages. Because setting up well-equipped and well-staffed language centres would take time, language training should also be provided through intensive summer programmes in universities with suitable facilities. Intensive summer programmes could be organised more quickly and should be pursued in an earnest manner.

Foreign languages of importance for India include English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, German, French, Russian, Spanish, Arabic, Bahasa Indonesia, Sinhala, Nepali, Farsi, and Swahili. Clearly some are more important than others and the country's needs should be prioritised. Where demand for a particular language is limited and providing training in that language is not financially feasible, a small number of scholars could be trained in foreign institutions in countries where the language is spoken. Funding should be available for students and scholars to conduct their research and language training in the countries that are relevant to their studies.

**With a few exceptions, the present crop of foreign policy and security research institutes and think tanks are noticeable by their marginal position or near total absence from the information and public policy sphere. Economic research institutes have fared relatively better.**

and strategic studies in India. Its success would hinge to a considerable degree on: institutional autonomy; an administrative structure and an intellectual environment that is conducive to open and free inquiry from different theoretical perspectives; a broad definition of security that goes beyond traditional security and straight strategic studies; and the recruitment of well-trained scholars to fill leadership and staff positions. The NDU should not be solely a teaching institution. It should have strong research centres as well. There are many models of NDUs. Those in China, Japan, United States, and United Kingdom, for example, differ significantly from one another. India should develop a university that meets its specific needs.

## **Language training centres and programmes**

The effort to build strong International Studies schools and programmes should be complemented, as necessary, by the development of relevant language training centres and programmes.

## **Professional development**

Success in building world-class institutions and programs hinges on a strong faculty and a dynamic and empowered student body. National educational authorities, universities, and professional associations should take sustained measures to upgrade the expertise and capability of faculty and students through challenging requirements, incentives, and opportunities.

## **Creating world-class research institutes and think tanks**

Research institutes and think tanks are an integral part of the architecture of International Studies. These may be located in or outside universities. Their primary role is research-based analysis of mid- to long-range policy-relevant issues and problems. The output of research institutes can contribute to academic inquiry and knowledge accumulation as well as inform public opinion and policy formulation. Think tanks have a much shorter time horizon and more explicit public information and policy functions. Through short reports, policy briefs, opinion columns, participation in policy seminars, and public presentations, they seek to inform the populace and policy makers and support or alter specific policies. Although not always possible, a distinction between

research institutes and think tanks can help channel resources in desired directions.

By supporting innovative research, research institutes can play a vanguard role in pursuing new ideas, concepts, and strategies, as well as new solutions to old problems. In the 1950s and 1960s, for example, the RAND Corporation in the United States was in the forefront of innovative research in the then new field of nuclear weapons, especially on the theory and strategy of deterrence. Research institutes and think tanks can also play important public information and policy roles in a democratic society such as India.

In their early years, the Centre for Policy Research (CPR) and the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) in New Delhi built a reputation for providing sound policy advice. IDSA came to be respected by officials and leaders across the political spectrum for its independent thinking. Over time, both the CPR and the IDSA appear to have declined in influence. Effort is now under way to rebuild these institutions under new leadership.

With a few exceptions, the present crop of foreign policy and security research institutes and think tanks are noticeable by their marginal position or near total absence from the information and public policy sphere. Economic research institutes have fared better than those in the foreign and security policy domains. Often government funded and/or staffed by retired diplomats and military officers, the foreign and security policy institutions have by and large followed the government line rather than providing deep analysis of policy alternatives. The interests and priorities of funders appear to have been limiting factors for institutions financed by private sector companies.

Looking forward, it is necessary to strengthen existing institutions and create new ones to discharge their public information and policy roles. In the long run the goal should be to build several prestigious institutions comparable to the U.S.-based Brookings Institution and Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, or the UK-based Institute for International and Strategic Studies (IISS). The intent would not be to replicate Western institutions in India. In fact, the considerable influence of think tanks in the United States may be unique to that country. Nevertheless, as demonstrated by the early experience of CPR and IDSA and the contemporary role of certain economic research institutes (such as the National Council of Applied Economic Research and the Indian Council for Research in International Economic Relations), space is available in India for sound policy-relevant work outside government.

Indian foreign and security policy research institutes and think tanks should capture and expand this space through innovative, high-quality work and interaction with policy-making agencies, the media, and relevant NGOs and international organisations. Their focus should be on developing innovative research agendas, building institutional expertise and capacity, developing strong databases, upgrading publication programmes, and disseminating timely policy analyses to relevant audiences.

### **Developing research agenda**

The choice and development of study programmes in research institutes and think tanks must be driven by contemporary as well as future demands in the market place. Research agendas

Photo: ICWA



**The centre for intellectual incubation**

should anticipate and address critical issues in the security of India and India's international roles and interactions. Research institutes should focus on topics that lend themselves to deep analysis over time, a luxury that is usually not available to public officials working under time constraints. Research agenda should be subject to periodic review with the goal of remaining current and relevant. Depth should be preferred to breadth in developing research agenda and building capacity.

### **Building capacity**

Many existing foreign and security policy research institutes and think tanks have limited capacity (few full-time research staff) and resources. For several reasons, retired public officials tend to dominate leadership and faculty positions. Although they can provide an important practical perspective, former civil servants, diplomats, and military officers cannot be the mainstay of research institutes or think tanks. Their viewpoint

can have unintended skewing and crowding-out effects. A judicious balance must be struck between those with strong policy experience and well-trained scholar-analysts with strong applied theoretical and methodological skills. Research institutes and think tanks should hire trained researchers with advanced degrees. Staff hiring and retention should be given due attention. The goal should be to assemble a critical mass of analysts in select areas. Again, depth should be favoured over breadth. Where local supply is a constraint, Indian institutions should be able to hire foreign scholars on a contract basis or to develop exchange programmes with foreign institutions.

Opportunities must exist for staff of research institutions and think tanks to develop research programmes and projects under their leadership, to collaborate with other institutions in country and abroad, to interact freely with government officials, to join the government for specific periods, to join professional associations, to parti-

more important is analysis, in which research institutes and think tanks can and should excel.

### Upgrading publications

Publications are a key indicator of the vitality and relevance of a research institution. Strong, regular, and timely publications are crucial in building the reputation of an institution. Without a strong publications programme, a research institution will have little or no credibility. Because research institutes and think tanks should be able to communicate with a wide audience, considerations of purpose and target group should differentiate their outputs. Publication in peer-reviewed journals is crucial to sustain and enhance researchers' standing in a discipline or field. Book-length works and monographs can provide deep, research-based analysis of selected issues and problems. Policy briefs and opinion pieces based on such research are another mode of communicating with and capturing the attention of the policy community in a timely manner. These types of publications as well as participation in seminars and media interviews and debates (on television and radio) must all be encouraged and required. Timely dissemination of analysis and opinion is especially important for think tanks. These institutions and the individuals in them should seek out target groups to communicate their research findings and policy positions.

### **India should revise its regulations, including its tax policy, to foster charitable giving to research institutes and think tanks, and to encourage public-private partnerships.**

participate in national and international meetings, and to publish in external peer-reviewed publications. These activities will help build individual expertise and enhance the capacity of the institutions that employ them.

### Developing databases

Lack of data is a serious problem for non-governmental research institutes in the foreign and security policy areas. Government agencies in these areas have a penchant for classifying almost everything. Nevertheless, it is possible to build strong databases through sustained and diligent efforts by dedicated staff. Data can be gathered from declassified government sources, foreign databases, defence publications, professional autobiographies, communications with government officials, and so forth. Many Western research institutions have developed databases equal to, and at times superior to, those of governments. Information is necessary; but even

### Collaboration with foreign institutions

If they bring comparative advantage and help in the development of a strong research environment, collaboration with foreign research institutions, and the setting up of research institutes and think tanks in India by foreign foundations and institutions should be welcomed. India's hesitation in regard to foreign institutions and international collaboration rooted in Cold War era considerations should be adjusted in favour of welcoming collaborative projects and exchanges of staff, as well as the adoption of best practices. This would be in line with the greater openness that has characterised India's economy and international interaction since 1991.

### Broadening the funding base

Government and big business have largely funded the establishment and development of research institutes and think tanks in India. This is likely to continue. However, it is necessary to broaden funding sources to include national and international charitable foundations. In the United States, private foundations are the primary source of funding support for research institutes and

think tanks. India should revise its regulations, including its tax policy, to foster charitable giving to research institutes and think tanks, and to encourage public-private partnerships. Government-funded institutions should be allowed to raise private money as long as it does not alter their purpose and role. Over time, some government-funded institutions should be allowed and encouraged to become fully independent of government support. New Delhi should also be more flexible in enabling Indian institutions to accept funds from abroad.

### **Conclusion**

Creating world-class teaching and research institutions and programs are a crucial component of a sustained effort to strengthen international studies in India. That effort must be multifaceted and involve the Government of India, the professional community, and the private sector. Upgrading international studies in India is not simply a resource issue, though funding is a key consideration. Equally important will be a commitment on

the part of government agencies, university and research institute administrators, schools and departments, faculty, students, and professional associations to reform and upgrade International Studies in India. Such a commitment would go a long way toward strengthening the field of International Studies in India, enhancing professional development and the knowledge base to support India's international interaction and role.

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# Parliament in the July-August 2009 session

M R MADHAVAN

## ► Synopsis

THE NEW parliament had a good start in its first full session: there were fewer interruptions, more time was spent on business, and importantly, parliament asserted its authority over the government on at least three occasions.

The session stuck to its original plan of sitting for 26 working days. Contrast this with the performance in the last two years. In 2007, there were 66 sittings compared to the 82 planned, while 2008 had 46 sittings (the lowest ever in a calendar year) versus 61 planned. The year 2008 also had the distinction of the monsoon session being extended till the Christmas in order to avoid a no-confidence motion.

While there were interruptions on a few occasions this session, and Lok Sabha lost 17 hours of its scheduled time, it made up lost time by sitting through lunch hour and working late. It actually worked 4 percent more time than scheduled. Rajya Sabha did even better, working 13 percent extra time.

The focus of Lok Sabha was on budget related discussions, which took half its total time. Usually, budget proposals are referred to Parliamentary Committees (each of which oversee one or more ministries). These committees have not yet been formed after the elections. Thus, the budget was discussed in detail on the floor of the house. Lok Sabha spent 81 hours on these debates, which was 59 percent higher than the average for the last 10 years. This was still lower

than the time spent during the 1950s and '60s, when the average time devoted to financial business was 137 hours.

Other major discussions included the implications of the Prime Minister's visits (the G8 meet and the Sharm-el-Sheikh joint statement), inflation and the drought situation. A discussion on swine flu was initiated on the second day of the session, but was not concluded. Lok Sabha spent 27% of its time on these discussions.

Rajya Sabha devoted 24 percent of its time on the budget and 23 percent on examining the working of various ministries. It spent 28 percent of its time on several other issues such as price rise of essential commodities, the need to prevent ragging, and obscenity in television programmes.

Legislation took a back seat during the session, with both houses allocating just 8 percent of their working hours for law making. The government had planned to introduce 29 bills and pass 13 bills (other than the budget related ones). It managed to introduce just 12 bills and pass three.

## ► Legislation

The three bills that were passed include the right to education bill, an amendment to the Constitution and one to the metro railways act.

Ten bills were introduced. Of these, seven had lapsed in the last Lok Sabha. These include the new companies bill and one to establish customs and immigration points at land borders. The three

new bills include an amendment to SEBI Act, an amendment of the rubber act and a bill to establish a national green tribunal that will settle environmental cases.

It is instructive to see the list of bills that were originally listed for passing but were not passed. The women's reservation bill---which proposes 33% quota for women in Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies---was not passed, as the government has not been able to build a consensus on the issue.

Other important bills that were not passed include the drugs amendment bill and the seeds bill. The president's address in June indicated the resolve to reintroduce and pass the land acquisition amendment and the rehabilitation and resettlement bill during this session---neither bill was introduced. The amendment to the forward contracts act was also not reintroduced.

## ► Assessment

On three different occasions in the last week of its session, parliament asserted its supremacy over the government. First, the law minister had to withdraw the motion to introduce the judges (assets) bill in Rajya Sabha on sustained opposition.

The bill had proposed that each high court and supreme court judge would declare their assets to the chief justice, and this declaration would not be available to any other person (and will be outside the purview of the right to information act).

Second, the Lok Sabha insisted on a debate on

the metro amendment bill, overruling the minister's request to pass the bill without discussion. Again, some Congress MPs raised objections and then were given the opportunity to make their points. The third instance related to the rubber amendment bill which was being proposed in the absence of the relevant ministers. The opposition insisted that the ministers should be present and that the discussion could be taken up at a later date when they were available.

These events bode well for the new parliament. In particular, the opposition should continue to question and oversee the actions of the government.

It is important to realise that disruptions and walk-outs only achieve a symbolic purpose, and do not further the oversight role of Parliament. Indeed, there should be a move towards having more working days in a year.

Interestingly, a private member's bill to has been introduced which proposes that each house of Parliament will have to work for at least 120 days and state legislative assemblies for 60 days every year. This bill was supported across party lines but the discussion was not completed. The spirit of this Bill---that Parliament spend more time highlighting and discussing national issue---must be maintained in the coming sessions.

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Photo: McKay Savage

## SOCIETY

**Let them come (even sans visa)**

*Academics, journalists and human rights activists should be welcomed*

SALIL TRIPATHI

EARLIER THIS summer, a woman in Latin America did not get the visa in time to make her trip to India to attend a conference. In itself, this would have been a minor incident, inconveniencing her, the conference organisers, and travel agents. Many people have to rearrange travel plans when they are unable to get their papers in order in time for visa officers to make their decisions. While individuals have the right to leave their country---and to return to their country---no country is under an obligation to accept a foreigner (with the exception being those fleeing conflict or have a well-founded fear of being persecuted, under international refugee law).

But this individual is an academic, and she was scheduled to present a paper about land and conflict dynamics in Latin America, and its impact on business operations. She has a PhD from a re-

puted university, and she was planning to attend a closed-door, privately-organised round-table on global issues concerning human rights, conflict, and development, and the role of business. She has worked at think tanks in the Americas, and is a frequent fixture at such seminars--this would have been her first trip to India.

She did not make her trip because Indian embassy's visa officers in her capital city, despite being reassured that she was going to speak about her experiences in her country, baulked. Fearing that someone further up the food chain in the ministry of external affairs might object later, they kept delaying the process until it was impossible for her to make the trip. She was not the only one who had to cancel; a British delegate had to drop plans, too. Meanwhile, two delegates traveling from the United States faced no problem.

This is not a plea for joined up thinking in India's ministry of external affairs, though that would be a good start. This is about the sheer lack of imagination of the babus, who tremble when they read words like conflict and human rights in the application of a foreigner wishing to visit India. Hers is hardly the only instance. There are several foreign journalists who have had to go through incredible hoops to assure visa officers that their interest in India is mainly benign. This means some journalists are forced to lie when they apply for a visa; or, reporters writing timid, safe stories about "incredible" India find it easier to get visas quickly. Why journalists? Academics who specialise in India too have had similar experiences, where papers they might write in obscure journals are perceived as part of an anti-India agenda on the part of the academic community. Development workers and human rights activists who wish to visit India even on a holiday have to provide guarantees in writing that they will not

proval, with officials lacking aesthetic sense or an awareness of the art form sitting on judgement whether a particular film can be made in India. Hypersensitive interest groups have already forced some filmmakers to cancel plans of filming in India. Deepa Mehta's *Water* is a recent example, but think of the criticism heaped upon Richard Attenborough when he was making *Gandhi*. One noted Gandhian said at that time: "We are not prepared to give our Gandhi to anyone."

This makes India's image-management look like Burma, China, and Indonesia under Suharto. It is grossly incompatible with a modern democracy on the cusp of great power status. Worse, it fails: impose restrictions on foreigners, and they will think India has something to hide, convincing the visitor to look for the stories that read like a pale imitation of Vandana Shiva, Arundhati Roy or P Sainath.

Whatever happened to India's soft power?

Joseph Nye gave wide currency to this notion, where he suggested that the United States need not throw its weight around the international stage; it could have its way through being attractive and positive. Singapore's founding father Lee Kuan Yew alluded to it, in comparing the United States with China, saying while both countries were comparable in many ways, the United States won the soft-power sweepstakes hands down, because of its vibrant popular culture, its brand names, and the sheer desirability of some of the ideas and ideals of America. China lacked those. Jackie Chan, try as he might, simply could not outrun Brad Pitt.

Before he became the minister of state for external affairs, Shashi Tharoor eloquently argued for India to use its soft power better. There is already a reservoir of goodwill for India in the West, for example: think of the popularity of yoga, the growing interest in Bollywood, the easy access to Indian spices and Indian foods abroad, the wide acclaim that greets many Indian writers, filmmakers, artists, and musicians--all of these, coupled with the successful staging of elections periodically, creates the impression that India is like any modern, western-style democracy.

That is, until the foreigner tries to visit India, to understand what makes that democracy work, where it may be getting corrupted, and what its failings are. This is a battle India can win easily against its inevitable rival in Asia and beyond, China: by being more open, India may reveal its weaknesses; but at least those weaknesses will be visible. By closing down, India may think it has hidden its weaknesses, but it will only confirm the worst fears other may have about India. How can

### **This is a battle India can win easily against China: by being more open, India may reveal its weaknesses; but at least those weaknesses will be visible. By closing down, India may think it has hidden its weaknesses, but it will only confirm the worst fears other may have about India.**

conduct any of their regular business while in India.

One human rights organisation had sent two of its representatives to India in early 2002, for a human rights education seminar. That week, a train burned in Godhra, killing 58 Hindus, and retaliatory riots followed, killing at least 900 people, 600 of them being Muslims. These activists faced the stark moral dilemma--whether to go to Gujarat and gather testimonies, or continue their participation in the seminar, as if nothing had happened.

Those critical of foreign busybodies--human rights activists, journalists, or academics--coming to India say that they aren't needed, because India has enough internal critics who have the freedom to say what they want, which is right, upto a point. But why impose restrictions at all? What does India have to hide?

Ask documentary film-makers and they will tell stories of having to submit scripts for ap-

a reporter, for example, figure out the strides it may have made in India, if he is not allowed to visit India to make a documentary on caste? How would an academic appreciate India's freedom of expression, if she is to go by the received wisdom from others? And yet, if either of them made an application for a visa, the process will be cumbersome; the application will get delayed.

This is India scoring a spectacular self goal. And to what end? Foreign correspondents can recall many stories where visa officers of authoritarian regimes delay issuing visas in the futile hope of shaping coverage that they fear will show their country in a poor light. During the last days of the Suharto-era in Indonesia, visa officers routinely took between one and two months issuing visas to correspondents---a rule that they waived if they were bribed, or if the reporters lied and sought tourist visas and then did their official business. (It's not that simple: if those reporters got caught, they could have ended up spending time in an Indonesian jail---which is not a prospect for the faint-hearted.) It is only after the International Monetary Fund effectively took over the management of the Indonesian economy in 1997, that the visa officers began issuing visas promptly.

India's practices---of seeking approvals from New Delhi, of requiring that the reporter or academic get the nature of her inquiry vetted first---make it look more like Indonesia under Suharto, and less like what it is---a democracy. India is

making life unnecessarily difficult for academics, writers, and activists, assuming that each of them is an agent provocateur intent on destabilising India. Instead, India should let its soft power prevail, and make their lives easy. Let them come. Let them come even without a visa. There's something called *atithi devo bhava* that the tourism department likes to talk about. Let them find things for themselves: the innate goodness of the Indian people, and the genuine openness of the society, which marks India as special in the developing world, will win most of them over.

It is only when India's sleuths stop spying on reporters and academics that they will have the time and resources to protect India's borders: where young men, barely out of their teens, can turn up, in hijacked fishing trawlers, and hold the nation in a fearful siege for three days. Such extremists enter India at will; the seashore remains vulnerable, but the babus in embassies abroad are busy stopping Oxbridge dons or Ivy League experts who want to come to India and talk about how Latin American countries deal with paramilitary forces and left-wing guerrillas fighting over oilfields, and its impact on human rights of indigenous people.

Indeed, incredible India.

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Salil Tripathi is a writer based in London and the author of *Offence: The Hindu Case*

## AGRICULTURE

# Monsoon failure

*Bracing for the 2009 drought*

TUSHAAR SHAH, AVINASH KISHORE & P HEMANT

AFTER A string of five good monsoons, India seems to have once again run out of luck this year. As rain-gods play truant, the government has declared drought in 161 districts. The kharif rice crop, about a quarter of the kharif food-grain and oilseed area, is expected to be 20 percent lower than expected.

Unless large parts of the country receive rains in August-September, the rain-fed paddy crop will have to be all but written off. And if rains fail after that, even rabi sowing will be severely affected,

what with empty reservoirs and depleted aquifers.

However, things may not be as bad as the doomsday stories suggest. The way Indian agriculture responds to drought during recent decades is very different from the way it responded for millennia before. Earlier, a drought for Indian farmers meant an entire crop-year lost. The main kharif crop would of course be lost. Empty tanks and reservoirs would also mean loss of rabi and summer crops.

With rapid development in groundwater irrigation, however, this situation has changed. When managed well, groundwater storage lasts long after all surface storages dry up during a drought. Compared to tanks and reservoirs, groundwater storage plays a much larger 'stabilisation' role as distinct from the 'production' role.

This has been evident in recent Indian experience. In 1965-66, when rainfall was 20 percent below normal, India suffered a 19 percent fall in food grain production over the previous year; but then, the groundwater revolution was just beginning. In 1987-88, in the middle phase of the groundwater boom, rainfall was 17.5 percent below normal; but food grain production was down by just over 2 percent.

But then India never paid attention to managing groundwater. Reckless expansion in groundwater irrigation without concomitant effort to replenish the resource left many aquifers depleted. As a result, in 2002 drought, which followed two weak monsoons, and when rainfall deficit was

in canal-recharged areas like upper Punjab and central Gujarat.

Hard rock areas of peninsular region—65 percent of India's landmass---are far more dependent on tanks and dug wells which become useless during a drought in the absence of aggressive groundwater recharge in preceding years of good monsoon. Little surprise then that the 2000 drought hit farmers in the southern states much harder than the tubewell irrigated states of the Indo-Gangetic basin.

This year too, the impact of the drought will be muted in tubewell-irrigated areas provided farmers there get sufficient power and diesel. For example, North Gujarat has received much less rain than it normally gets. However, these are deep tube-well irrigated areas; and farmers of Gujarat receive adequate power supply. So these will easily survive the coming drought. However, if there is another drought in succession in 2010, things will be different.

Dairying has emerged as another bulwark against the Indian drought. In the past, saving the cattle from starving was the major concern of the Indian farmer. Today, the situation is totally different; now dairying booms during a drought. During the 2002 drought, the value of paddy and oilseeds output fell nearly 20 percent and of wheat, nearly 10 percent; but the value of livestock and milk production grew nearly 3 percent on an all-India basis; it grew much more in semi-arid western India. In states like Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh, during the past 20 years, milk production has steadily increased, through good monsoons as well as bad, even as production of field crops has fluctuated widely.

Dairying has been the farmer's adaptive strategy during droughts. As crops fail, most farmers divert land, water and other resources to produce more feed and fodder to preserve their livelihoods and income. And milch cattle respond strongly, and immediately, to better feeding by readily yielding more milk.

But dairying works as a drought-buffer only where there exists a strong network of dairy cooperatives. These help convert increased milk production into what Amartya Sen called 'exchange entitlements'. Eastern India does not have strong milk marketing institutions. As a result, dairying plays no drought-buffer role here. The small holder in Bihar or Orissa can not rely on milk to tide over a drought quite like small farmers can in Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan or Tamil Nadu.

While the 2009 drought will have to be dealt with in a crisis mode, there is renewed demand

### **The only storage that can provide some measure of drought proofing is groundwater storage. Instead of pumping money on dams and canals, Indian agriculture will be better off investing in groundwater banking.**

again 20 percent, groundwater failed to stabilise Indian agriculture. Farm output fell by 20 percent, as it had done in 1966. If 2009 ends up a drought, it may not be as bad as 2002, because it follows some good monsoons which are likely to have added to natural recharge.

A pecking order has now emerged in India with respect to drought-proneness of different areas. Rain-fed agriculture areas are hit the hardest by a drought. Areas in tank commands can salvage some of their crops by utilising some groundwater recharged by tanks for supplemental irrigation. Canal commands under run-of-the river systems are better protected than tank commands but not as well-protected as command areas of reservoir-based irrigation systems. Dugwell-irrigated areas in canal commands are less affected by drought than those dependent on recharge from rainfall because these latter dry up during a drought. By far the best protected areas are those irrigated by deep tubewells, especially

for more large-scale irrigation projects and inter-linking of rivers as a long term response. However, by themselves, dams and canals have proved increasingly useless during droughts. Few Indian dams have carry-over storage that is available to drought-proof agriculture. More the use of dam storage is driven more by the demands of power generation than by the needs of the farmers. The only storage that can provide some measure of drought proofing is groundwater storage. Instead of pumping money on dams and canals, Indian agriculture will be better off investing in groundwater banking. This involves storing surplus flood waters in aquifers which can be drawn upon in times of need.

India needs to re-invent canal irrigation as a means to bank groundwater in times of surplus water availability. Instead, command areas of many existing irrigation projects are shrinking because of a variety of reasons. Many tertiary canals are in disrepair. When water does not reach tail ends, farmers flatten canals and bring the land under plough. Also, as farmers turn to groundwater, they lose interest in canals and their maintenance. According to government data, despite massive investments in the so called Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Program, India's canal irrigation is decelerating and has lost 3 million hectares of canal-irrigated areas since 1991.

This trend does not augur well for insulating the country from drought. The best thing that can be done with India's surface storages is to maximise their use for groundwater banking by spreading the water over as large an area as possible. For the Indian water establishment, however, using surface water resources for groundwa-

ter recharge is a blasphemy. But this is a common practice in arid and semi-arid regions like the western United States and Australia. Surplus surface water is dispatched to groundwater aquifers which evaporate far less and are therefore good storages. In times of need, stored groundwater is pumped and transported to areas in need. Such groundwater banking can insulate India from droughts.

Groundwater banking is an idea whose time has come in India. The concept must be adapted to fit our reality. India may not have vast unpeopled areas that can serve as recharge basins. But we can certainly evolve recharge technologies suited to our conditions. Groundwater banking can be done in a decentralised format as well; and National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) could be an ideal vehicle for doing this.

If the monsoon fails to revive, 2009 will be the year for NREGA. Many states have not been able to use the resources available under this ambitious scheme to provide employment guarantee to rural poor. In a drought, however, demand for work will increase manifold. And the best works to undertake would be structures to support groundwater banking. NREGA can provide employment to the needy as well as prepare the ground for dealing with future droughts. If every village were to construct five new water harvesting and recharge structures, and de-silt existing ones, it will be better prepared to survive the next drought when it comes.

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## RURAL DEVELOPMENT

### Terminate NREGA

*It's populist. It's ineffectual. It has to go.*

PRASHANT KUMAR SINGH

THE OVERARCHING theme of the July 2009 budget has been the UPA government's emphasis on the social sector schemes--rural employment guarantee, Bharat Nirman, rural housing, Indira Awas Yojana, urban renewal--for ensuring "equitable growth" and "inclusive growth", by way of injecting huge funds in such schemes multiple

times than last year's outlay, notwithstanding the high targeted fiscal deficit to GDP ratio of 6.85 percent.

The *piece de resistance* is the staggering Rs 39,100 crore (US\$8 billion) allocations to UPA's flagship National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) scheme, which has a 144 percent

outlay compared to the previous year---almost one percent of India's GDP.

NREGA and its earlier avatar, NDA government's Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY), are akin to a public works programme, designed to function as a social safety net by providing employment at a prescribed wage while creating mainly public goods or assets. Such public works programmes undertaken for alleviating poverty and economic development in any country are a part of widespread economic fallacy, expounded by French political economist, Frédéric Bastiat, in his 1850 essay, "Ce qu'on voit et ce qu'on ne voit pas" (That Which Is Seen and That Which Is Unseen).

The mainstream media and the political pundits were quick to attribute the UPA's 2009 electoral success primarily to NREGA. The corporate

Programme (NFWP) in 2004. Despite massive expenditure, none of these schemes have been able to spur growth or make a dent in poverty in rural India, much like the otiose development aid programmes in the African continent.

The NREGA, launched in 2006 with a similar design as the NFWP, purports to be different from the earlier poverty alleviation schemes by legally guaranteeing 100 days of unskilled jobs per rural indigent household; with provisions for unemployment allowance if a household is not provided employment within 15 days. The Act aims to eradicate extreme poverty and make villages self-sustaining by creating productive assets such as water tanks and soil conservation works, as opposed to capital intensive activities in earlier schemes. The aim is to regenerate the rural natural resource base, which in turn will result in sustainable livelihoods for residents. The Act places Panchayati Raj institutions at the village level at the helm of affairs.

Unfortunately, the facts regarding the implementation of the scheme speak otherwise. A study by think-tank National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) and Public Interest Foundation (PIF), a non-governmental organisation highlighted many flaws which bedevil the NREGA, including funds not reaching its intended beneficiaries, significant inflation in official numbers regarding creation of actual jobs and man-days, fraudulent payments, extraction of money in wage through bank, post-office and other accounts, questionable quality of assets created under the scheme and their long term usefulness, selection of works, poor execution, inflated estimates, cost overruns, and delays in release of funds by states.

Recently, a day after the budget presentation, the rural development minister admitted to huge slips in the implementation of the scheme, but added in the same breath that the onus for its implementation lay on the states as the central government gives only directions on implementation.

Even after muted admission of the failures of the NREGA and disowning responsibility for its implementation, there is no sign of any reconsideration by the government regarding future and size of the scheme due to the prevailing groupthink.

### Clarity of socio-economic objectives

Under the NREGA, only 82 percent of the funds during 2007-08 and 75 percent during 2008-09 were utilised. After the unduly high and hasty outlay to NREGA---in euphoria of an election victory---it would be prudent to allocate funds to

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sector indirectly joined the chorus, attributing the stable demand in the rural areas---even in these recessionary times---to the purchasing power of the rural consumer, which was again linked to the NREGA. Electoral outcomes are complex processes---and even when supported by any statistical jugglery---cannot be attributed to an overriding factor like the NREGA, which can at best be correlation and not causation.

### **Public works programmes have uninspiring track records**

India has seen a host of poverty alleviation schemes in previous decades: the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) in 1980; the Rural Landless Employment Guarantee (RLEG) in 1983; the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY), combining NREP and RLEG in 1989; the Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) in 1993; the Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY) in 1999; the Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY), merging JGSY and EAS in 2002; and the National Food for Work

states in a phased manner once the many troubles plaguing the NREGA have been resolved. Instead of a country-wide implementation of the scheme, the government would do well to carry out a comprehensive analysis of the states like Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu---which claim to have successfully implemented the scheme---to understand the best practices and implement a modified delivery mechanism, with a final aim of phasing out the present scheme in within the next three years.

In the long term, prior to undertaking such large scale interventions for achieving equitable growth, the government must elucidate its socio-economic objectives without any inherent contradictions. If the aim is to provide for a social insurance and safety net then cash transfers or conditional cash transfers to the needy, like the Brazilian government's *bolsa familia*, is a better option. Also, this can have a wider ambit by including specific disadvantaged groups/households comprising old women, orphans and disabled; who do not have an able-bodied member to undertake manual labour under the NREGA.

If providing large scale employment to people, without regard to productivity and efficient use of capital is the only criteria for NREGA, then there is no reason to wind down government ownership of public sector units as they are the largest provider of employment. In fact, development activities for asset creation on a fast track---and subsequent management and maintenance of these assets---can be undertaken more effectively through existing institutional mechanisms, distinct from NREGA, by employing machinery on work sites—expressly forbidden under the NREGA.

### **Quick fixes won't work**

Understandably, a democratically elected government can not appear to be callous to the plight of millions mired in extreme poverty while waiting for the 'trickle-down effect'. Given the perceived political dividends from populist schemes, the temptation to intervene---albeit with noble

intentions---for getting quick but scrimpy results is strong.

Nevertheless, the government must remember that such interventions for improving or shaping social and economic outcomes, however well chosen, are a means of last resort. State interventions in this form, having limited palliative effects, are no substitute for structural reforms to address unemployment and sustained poverty alleviation in rural areas, for achieving equitable growth.

Reforms should aim to raise per capita income in the rural areas—by enhancing relative income—and, therefore, would necessitate reduction in the hands dependent on agricultural activities, on one hand, and a step-up in the manufacturing sector, on the other. The manufacturing industries that will absorb the rural labour force need not be only the traditional large scale industries based in and around urban areas, but SMEs in rural areas engaged in industries such as food processing, dairy products and herbal products to avert migration of multitudes from rural to urban areas.

It might be politically expedient to increase the size of the scheme in the mistaken notion that it directly translates into votes, considering the forthcoming assembly elections in many Indian states, but it will be economically suicidal for the country. The opportunity cost of gargantuan spending in social safety schemes for the entire economy--which will not be visible in the immediate and short term--will be very high in the long term, especially due to the large borrowing by the government.

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## PUBLIC POLICY

## Reforming for the poor

*Regulations must not cramp economic freedom*

NAVEEN MANDAVA



Photo: Ruth998

**Frequently, the law restricts opportunities for economic livelihood of those with lower incomes. The state's regulatory apparatus is geared to impoverish them and make them dependent on welfare schemes.**

"WOH GARIBI nahi, garibon ko hatana chahte hain" (They want to remove the poor, not poverty). Everything that was happening was evidence of what Gangamma, a street vendor in local market in Delhi, said.

A swarm of police-men descending on street vendors in a raid that would make Genghis Khan look like a pen invader. Wares confiscated, carts upturned and weighing instruments usurped to strategically end any future sales. What lingers is the frustrated quizzical look on their faces. Is earning a honest livelihood a crime of such proportion? With no other jobs, their day's income is lost.

But let not sympathy cloud our perception. What is also not easily observable is loyal and efficient policemen of the state clearing the streets to protect pedestrians' and other road users' rights. All of it for public interest. Don't we complain when the streets are blocked? They have a legal mandate to safeguard the street from encroachments. The key question is how public policy should think about making the right choices here.

In city after city, the police and the poor fight these economic wars in the background--the enterprise of the poor versus the law upholding public interest. These enterprises could be street hawking, cycle-rickshaws and auto-rickshaws, other micro-enterprises like shops and even small "budget" schools. In each of them, we find that the law restricts their opportunities for economic livelihood. The state's regulatory apparatus is geared to impoverish them and make them dependent on welfare schemes.

Often the laws are well intentioned but have negative consequences on ground. For example, regulations in Delhi state that a rickshaw can only be driven by an owner and an owner can have only one rickshaw. This means that the owner can never expand his business and will always be restricted to the subsistence revenue. Given the limited licenses, it means there is a high cost of obtaining that license. In reality, it is only the rich middle-men or *thekedars* who get these licences and give out rickshaws for hire. Instead of the poor getting richer, we have the rich getting richer.

When it comes to setting up enterprises, there are the usual licensing and high cost of running business issues. For example, if you have a meat shop, the slaughter of animals is licensed and capped. This basically means there is an informal high cost market for obtaining meat. When opening any school, regulations require a school to have a playground of 720 square feet which makes the whole enterprise prohibitive. The government has decided, on behalf of the poor, that if they are better off without a school if they cannot have one with a playground. They are restricted

to government schools without any choice to go to better schools. In all these situations, we are not sure whether government actions ensure more access at lower cost and higher quality.

The government solutions focus, in principle, on precluding or restricting these kinds of economic activities or, on judicious allocation of resources like public space. Those in favour of the public interest can ask for more monitoring; more severity of punishment. Decisions like these are pondered everyday in government departments especially at the municipal level. Others in favour of entrepreneurship and economic livelihoods of the poor want them to be given more leeway since they are in favour of voluntary exchanges. But some of these have direct externalities like pedestrian space and street vendors. So decisions boil down to where they should be allowed and who can be allowed and suchlike.

Some of the private sector solutions for the poor have focused on providing credit to informal enterprises. Do we want our streets littered with informal enterprises high on credit? Is this the price of prosperity for the poor? Are these our only choices? Are our hearts and minds in the right place together?

What provides a ray of hope out of this problem is that this quality of life is not their choice as well. Most of them enter these professions due to lack of wage-jobs and do not wish to battle the police or be confined to selling on the street all their life. Much of their enterprise is borne more out of a need for survival rather than a pursuit of entrepreneurial value creation. If there were more wage-jobs around we would not see much of

these micro-enterprises and then not be forced to make these choices. The question is, how do we alter the prices of micro-enterprisers' behaviour so that we don't face these difficult choices.

What is interesting is that when we look around the world, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) drive employment and growth. Unlike the necessity-driven entrepreneurship of informal micro-enterprises, they have more of an opportunity entrepreneurship dimension. In other words, they set up small businesses because they want to, not because they have to. Growth of this kind of opportunity entrepreneurship requires economic freedom. Even successful credit provision to informal and micro-enterprises requires economic freedom. If economic freedom is improved through deregulation and sensible regulation, then a lot of necessary entrepreneurship will move to areas of higher return. Necessary regulation involves building institutions that elevate the quality of market like ratings, branding and certifications.

If we do this, then the size of the problem is reduced and we don't have to deal with survival-based enterprises which inflict externalities on others, and hence provide difficult decisions for us. Our choices will then be neither that complicated nor that consequential.

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## REVIEW

**Sometimes for America, always for itself**

*A history of the guardian of Pakistan's ideological frontiers*

VENKAT ANANTH

CROSSED SWORDS: *Pakistan, its Army and the Wars Within* is perhaps one of the most definitive and authoritative attempts at an honest appraisal of the Pakistan Army since its creation after Partition---how it began seeing India and the world

and eventually, how it began shaping the political destiny of Pakistan through political control, mismanagement and military misadventures.

What sets this book apart is the insider's perspective that Shuja Nawaz takes and sustains throughout the discourse. Several members of his family have held high military ranks and General Asif Nawaz, his late brother, was the army chief between 1991 and 1993. The result is a careful examination of the institution that has gradually positioned itself as one of the most powerful institutions in Pakistan. This is not just in relation to the several military coups witnessed in the past, but also how it has eventually controlled policies it sees beyond the capabilities of any civilian

## Review

**Crossed Swords: Pakistan, its Army and the Wars Within**

by Shuja Nawaz  
Oxford University Press, 600 pages, 2008

arrangement---let alone the one today headed by Asif Ali Zardari.

Pakistan's relations with the United States form the common narrative through the book. Right from its initial days as a new-born country seeking legitimacy

within the larger international system to one where it became the more dominant, if not demanding partner of the two, Pakistan's policies have been an on-and-off affair. What began as an exercise to procure military aid from the United States with a constant invoking of possible Indian aggression from the east gradually progressed to stockpiling weapons for a later war against India. The United States, having seen Pakistan's location as intrinsically strategic to its geopolitics, also began to cave in to Pakistan's "lip-service". The exchanges between the early Pakistani heads of states and their US counterparts---Liaquat Ali Khan and President Truman, for instance---were largely centred around how Pakistan's geo-

strategic position in the world could help the United States in its sustained effort to firstly keep a check against the growing influence of communism and later, fight against it if required. And having fallen out with Jawaharlal Nehru's India (after what Robert McMahon described Nehru's trip to the United States in 1949 as the "least successful state visits in recent history") the United States zeroed in on Pakistan as the country they would want to befriend and cultivate relations with--one that would last much beyond the threat of communism.

As slow and steady as it was, Pakistan became the beneficiary of heavy military and non-military US aid, which came with strings attached--dispatching troops to places where the US was fighting wars--Korea and subsequently Vietnam. But, even at this point, as Mr Nawaz notes regularly, US administrations knew of Pakistan's real intentions---a war against India to seek a military solution to Kashmir. Yet, the Americans kept quiet, constantly giving in to President Ayub Khan's demands. Khan played the anti-communism card perfectly, so much so that President Nixon is reported to have once remarked, "that he will do anything for Pakistan." Even in the 1971 war over Bangladesh, the United States released unconditional military supplies to Pakistan, against what it saw as naked Indian aggression. Pakistan also acted as a noted emissary of the United States to China and helped the Americans improve their relations with Beijing. It also received support from the Chinese against India.

The 1980s, as Mr Nawaz describes, was a game-changer in US-Pakistan relations, with the Soviets invading Pakistan. And for once, it wasn't pure lip-service, but an actual Communist invading force. Enter the Soviet Union, and enter the ISI to the forefront of Pakistan's covert war against them. Until then, the ISI was restricted to being the back-benchers of Pakistani military and foreign policy. But, as trouble ensued in Afghanistan, there was more direct collaboration between the CIA and ISI. The role of the paramilitary mujahideens has been well-documented. But, even after the war was done and dusted, troubles began between the US and Pakistan over its covert nuclear programme and AQ Khan's proclamation of helping lesser (Muslim majority) nations in their quest for an Islamic bomb. That's when things changed. As Mr Nawaz notes, the misinformation campaign by Zia-ul-Haq and his aides added to the disenchantment within the US administration and its policies towards Pakistan.

The subsequent decade where Pakistan's intelligence grew itself out of the background and into

its notorious self is something Mr Nawaz could have examined in greater depth as Ahmed Rashid and Zahid Hussain have done in their works. In the 1990s, when Pakistan's descent into political chaos began, with the musical chairs well in place---Benazir Bhutto, Nawaz Sharif and the Army---relations with the United States froze over Pakistan's Islamic bend, and of course, its nuclear test in 1998. But as it has been time and again observed, when there is a lull in relations, out comes the storm---in this case, 9/11. Even as Pakistan positioned itself as one of the earliest partners in the 'War on Terror', Mr Nawaz notes that the ISI did what it could to stall the American efforts. He quotes Mahmud Ahmed, the then ISI chief, saying "Why would I, a Muslim go against another Muslim?" when he was quizzed about him letting the Taliban leader Mullah Omar go scot-free.

Apart from just the nature of US-Pakistani rela-

**Mahmud Ahmed, the then ISI chief, said "Why would I, a Muslim, go against another Muslim?" when he was quizzed about him letting the Taliban leader Mullah Omar go scot-free.**

tions, which dominates much of the book, there is a wider analysis of failed civilian governments, and why the military saw itself as the only alternative to Pakistan's polity. Corruption not just among the political brass, but also within the bureaucracy was one of the military's reasons for occupying a larger political role and space in Pakistan.

Also, one of the interesting aspects about the research of the book is the wider analysis of the way the Pakistani army is structured and composed of in terms of ethnic groups. While it is still a predominantly Punjabi *Mussalman* army, recent trends and figures have shown a rise in recruitment from provinces that have historically been ignored---Sindh and Balochistan. Ever since the Zia years, the Pakistan Army, as Mr Nawaz says, has emerged as a lucrative and attractive bread-winning profession for the urban youth. As a country that has seen military rule for a majority

of its 62 years, Mr Nawaz suggests a significant revamp of the political system in Pakistan to help stave off repeated coups. As he concludes, "If Pakistan is to mature, thrive and survive as a successful state and a nation, the army has to take a back seat and allow the politicians and the civil societies to make their mistakes and allow the other critically important elements of the society---mass media, educational institutions, businesses, professionals and lawyers etc to function unfettered."

That is perhaps the long road ahead for Pakistan in its constant search for legitimacy and a transformation from just a country into a nation.

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